

# NEWS RELEASE



From Rep. Charles B. Rangel  
Ranking Democrat, Committee on Ways and Means  
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Ranking Democrat, Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Oprah to Shine Spotlight on Growing Poverty in America** *Ignoring 'dirty secret' jeopardizes economic and national security*

**Washington, DC** – Oprah Winfrey will join investigative reporters Anderson Cooper, Maria Shriver and Gayle King today to uncover the 'dirty secret' of poverty in America. Ms. Winfrey will dedicate today's *Oprah Show* to telling the stories of some of the more than 37 million Americans who live in poverty and are struggling to make a brighter future for themselves and their children.

**"Anyone who doubts that one person can make a difference should watch The Oprah Winfrey Show today,"** said Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA), senior Democrat on the Ways and Means Human Resources subcommittee. **"Single-handedly, she will show us that poverty in America is not measured by charts, or graphs, or polling data, but in the faces, voices and stories of children- over five million- and their families who will go to bed hungry tonight in the United States of America. My hope is Ms. Winfrey's program ignites a demand for action by people across America."**

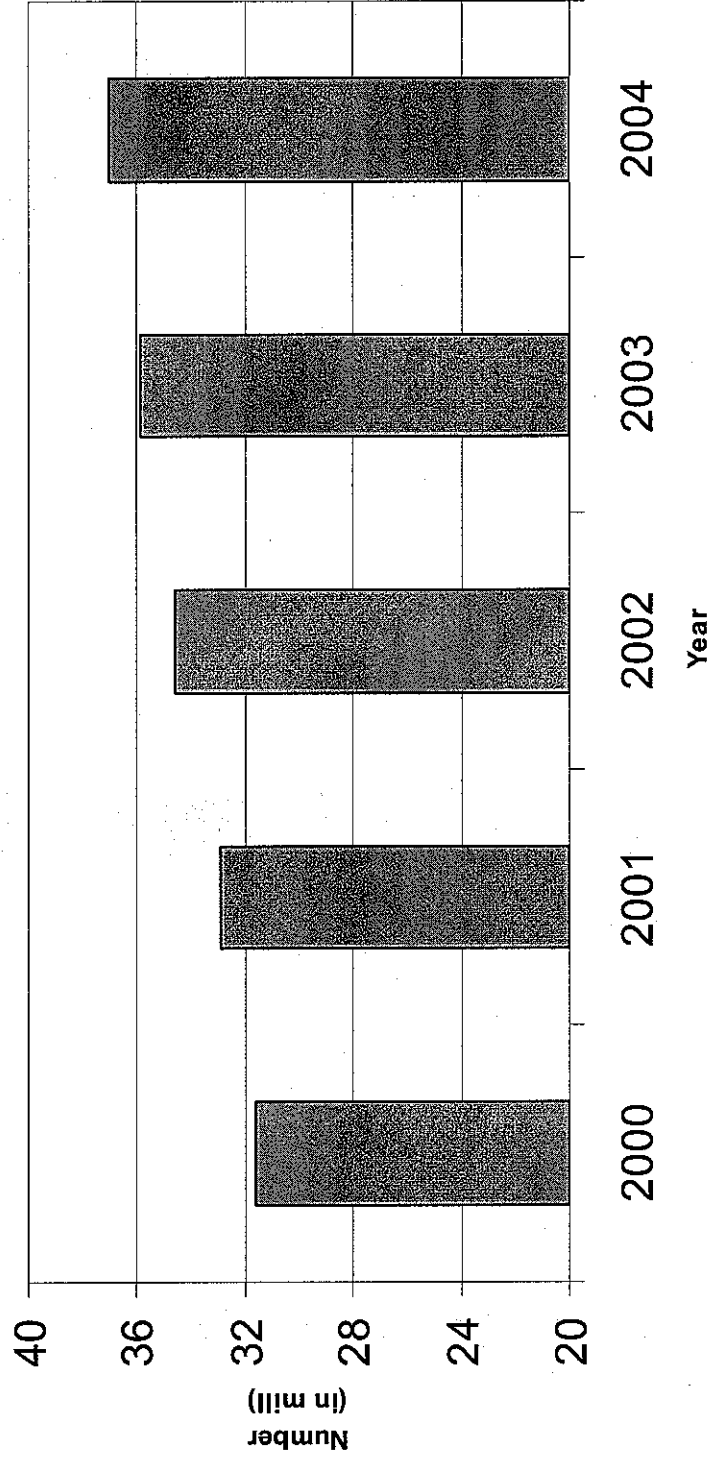
According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of Americans living in poverty increased by more than 5.4 million between 2000-2004. Similarly, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports the percentage of American children living in poverty is second highest among developed countries (see attached charts.) Despite these disturbing facts and the heart-wrenching scenes of poverty unveiled after hurricane Katrina, little has been done in Congress, or by the Bush Administration to combat this growing threat to American economic and national security.

**"I am heartened that Oprah has focused her spotlight on the growing poverty in America,"** said Rep. Charles B. Rangel. **"Poverty not only pricks our conscience, but it shortchanges our future as well. Society ultimately pays for poverty through a less productive workforce, more crime, higher use of welfare, greater drug addiction and other social ills. We have a choice - we can either invest in our future or pay for our past. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership in Washington has chosen the latter path by ignoring the problem, even after Hurricane Katrina exposed the severe hardships imposed upon America's less fortunate."**

**"We are only as strong as our most vulnerable citizens. When even one child in this nation goes hungry, every American suffers,"** cautioned Rep. McDermott. **"It doesn't have to be this way, but those who control government today have chosen not to fight a war at home against poverty, the enemy of hope and a grave threat to the future of this country. Military security without humanitarian security is an America without security."**

# FOUR CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF INCREASING POVERTY

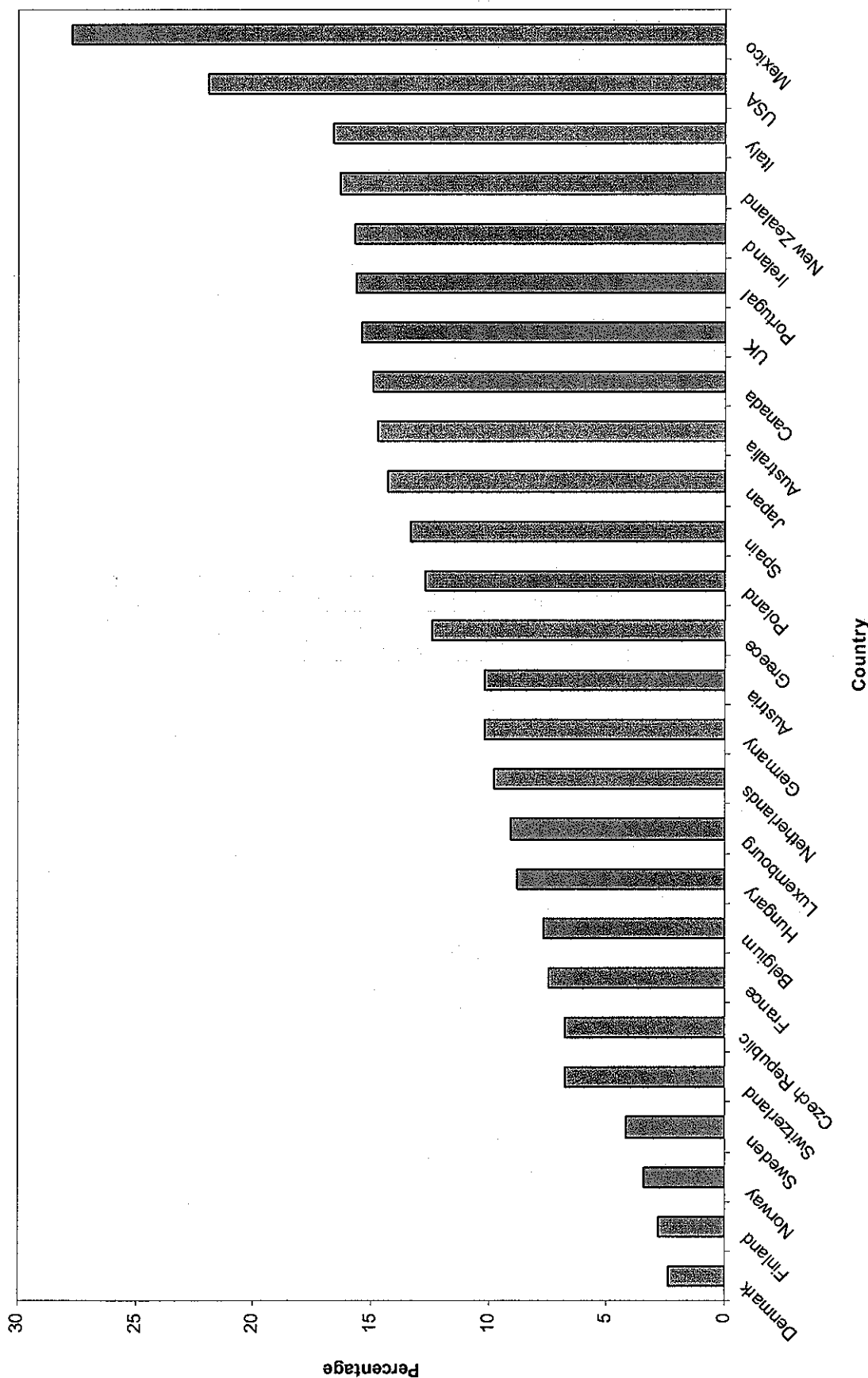
**The Number of Americans Living in Poverty Increased by  
5.4 Million Between 2000-2004**



Prepared by the Democratic Staff of the Committee on Ways and Means, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, on 10/11/05.

# CHILD POVERTY IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Percent of Children Living Below National Poverty Lines



**Note:** The bars show the percentage of children living in relative poverty, defined as households with income below 50 percent of the national median income.  
**Source:** Prepared by the Committee on Ways and Means, based on data from UNICEF, 10/14/05.